

2. How Do I Install the PC Pricer?

2.1 System Requirements

Prior to attempting to install the PC Pricer, ensure that your PC is compatible with the software. The PC Pricer requires the Windows 95 operating system or a higher version of Windows (e.g. Windows 98, NT, ME, XP, etc.). The PC Pricer program and its associated files require at least 8 megabytes of free disk space. Both monochrome and color monitors are supported. A printer is essential to produce the report that displays the Pricer results. Finally, the Pricers can run in a network environment.

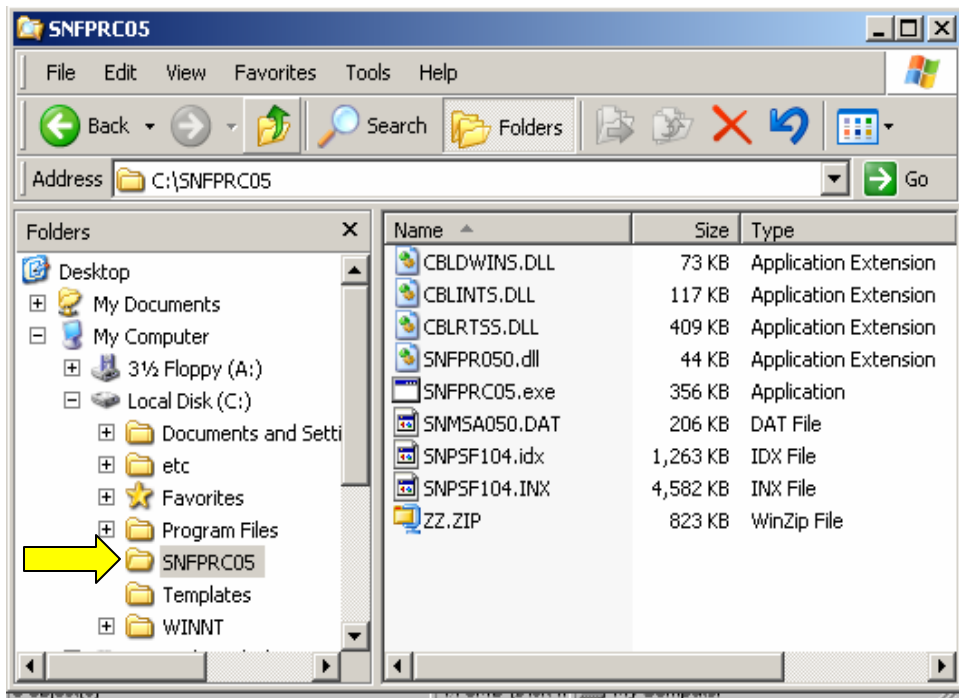
2.2 Downloading from the Internet

The PC Pricer is available as a free download from the CMS website. Go to the PC Pricer home page at www.cms.hhs.gov/providers/pricer/. All currently maintained PC Pricers for Medicare PPSs are available from this page. Scroll down the page until you see the heading entitled "Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF PPS) PC Pricer" and then click the link for the fiscal year version you wish to download. This will initiate the transfer of a zipped file. On the "File Download" screen that follows, select the "Save this program to disk" option and click okay. Use the "Save As" screen that appears next to choose a drive or folder on which to save the zipped file, then click "Save." Downloading the zipped file should take less than 2 minutes, though download speed may vary based upon your modem and internet connection.

2.3 Installation Instructions

Locate the downloaded zipped file on the drive you chose to save. Double click on this file. This will initiate a series of screens allowing you to save the Pricer files to your hard drive. **IMPORTANT:** Accept the default locations suggested on the screens. The PC Pricer may be saved to the user's desired drive. It must be saved with the default folder name SNFPRCxx, with the xx being two numbers corresponding to the fiscal year for the Pricer. If these default settings are changed, the PC Pricer will not function.

Once the unzipping of the file is complete, Windows Explorer will display the following (although folders other than the SNFPRCxx folder will vary):



2.4 Keeping the software current

Each version of the SNF PPS PC Pricer contains software designed to calculate payments for a particular Federal fiscal year. The Federal fiscal year runs from October 1st of one year to September 30th of the next. That means the fiscal year 2000 PC Pricer will calculate claims beginning on or after October 1, 1999 and ending on or before September 30, 2000. To calculate claims beyond this date range, the fiscal year 2001 PC Pricer must be downloaded.

What this means for most SNFs is that you will likely want to maintain on at least one PC in your operation the PC Pricers applicable to claims within the full Medicare claims timely filing period. Since the timely filing period extends 15 to 27 months beyond the service dates of a claim, you may want to maintain three PC Pricers at one time. In fiscal year 2003, claims with dates in fiscal years 2001, 2002 and 2003 will be timely for Medicare filing. When fiscal year 2004 begins, you will want to download the 2004 PC Pricer, but will be able to remove the 2001 version from your PC.

Note: For FY 2006, there will be two sets of rates. However, one module, available September 2005, will contain both sets of rates (10/1/05-12/31/05 rates and 1/1/06-9/30/06 rates). There will be no replacement version for the January 2006 rate updates.

New Pricer versions for a new fiscal year are available for download on or before October 1st of each year. SNFs will rarely have reason to update the software more frequently than annually although the software is routinely updated quarterly. Unless mid-year legislative changes affect Medicare payment rates, these interim updates only

affect the providers listed in the provider files contained in the download (see Chapter 4 for more information on the provider files).